

# The Collegium Oto-Rhino-Laryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum (CORLAS): what, when, now and future!

The Collegium Oto-Rhino-Laryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum (CORLAS) was established on the 8th of October, 1926 in Gröningen, The Netherlands. The founders were Charles Emile Benjamins, Gröningen and Adriaan de Kleyn, Amsterdam.

Membership of the CORLAS can be elected from any country, with an official quota for each country limited to 13 (10 clinical and 3 non-clinical) regular members with the exception of the United States that is allowed a maximum of 26 (20 clinical and 6 non-clinical). This limitation of members, applicable to each country except the USA, makes little sense. Firstly, the development of research in otolaryngology has not been achieved to the same high standard in all countries; on the other hand, when the quota of a particular country has been fulfilled, the possibility persists that those up-and-coming outstanding younger otolaryngologists with a higher activity in research than some or any of their current country members must wait for a vacancy to appear when either an existing member reaches 60 years or dies. The current membership for the year 2024 was 631 members: Honorary members > 70 years, 300; Senior members > 60 years, 158; Regular members < 60 years, 173.

Candidates for membership of the CORLAS must be proposed by a majority of the members from their appropriate national group (only Regular or Senior members may vote for submission of a specific country's candidate). This system of selection for membership application is a means of cooptation among the members of each national group, may risk being endogamic, and resembles a system of access to an "inner-sanctum" or "fraternity" of an Exclusive Society. In addition, there remains the possibility that such a system of selection and nomination makes it possible that a dominant majority of a national group of one "school" may reject a member of another "school" despite his/her merits.

Although the current rules of the CORLAS is that the election of candidature should be by a democratic vote limited to the members of each nation's membership, it remains possible that a single member and/or the chairperson, in particular, can veto such a candidate, or delay his/her application. There is no statute defining the specifications for selection or processing of persons for candidature. The current upper age limit for members of 50 years in proposing an individual for candidature favours the ability to introduce social and political manoeuvres that may delay nomination until the candidate has passed 50 years of age. This nominal age limit may on occasion be unfair. Taking into account this current system of nomination, it is possible and likely that up-and-coming otolaryngologists may have achieved a higher impact score in research than any of their current members of their national group and may be excluded. For example: the H-index score of several current members of the CORLAS ranged from a very low score, whereas people with H-index > 50 have been excluded or not considered.

The need for an organisation gathering "the elite" of our specialty is questioned, but the CORLAS is not such an organisation, being more similar to a

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“fraternity” or a club of friends or acquaintances. Such an assertion has been made on the CORLAS web page with the quote “The true spirit of the Collegium cannot be set down in rules and only exists thanks to the members for whom the Amicitiae Sacrum forms an integral part of their scientific aspirations”, and is coherent with the spirit of the founders in 1926 and the times they lived.

To become a true “elite” organisation, the application for membership must be open to anybody reaching a research or clinical standard defined by parameters such as: impact factor, H-index, Scopus, etc., with no national quotas no limitation of the total number of members. If this was the case, candidates for membership should be objectively evaluated by the members of the Credentials Committee, thus resulting in a fair and equitable membership group.

The main activity of the CORLAS is an annual scientific meeting with 2 or 3 mini-symposia on a specific theme, with the remaining programme composed of free communications. A non-member may be invited to present a paper or participate in a mini-symposium, but the number of papers by non-members should not exceed 10. The scheme of these meetings seems to be old fashioned and lacks dynamism. Nowadays the events are overseen and organised by the more active national and international scientific societies including a very wide programme, with workshops, round tables, lectures, etc. In addition, these societies organise working groups on particular subjects which deliver

reports, and also allows the participation of physicians and investigators involved in the area of interest. Considering that the objective of the CORLAS should be the promotion of research, its low-level commitment in the creation of research networks in different areas among its members to promote cooperative research is not understandable.

If science is the “raison d’être” of the CORLAS, it should select the most distinguished scientists (clinical and non-clinical) for membership. Therefore, it is time for CORLAS to change: the current “anachronistic club” should progress toward a modern scientific society.

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